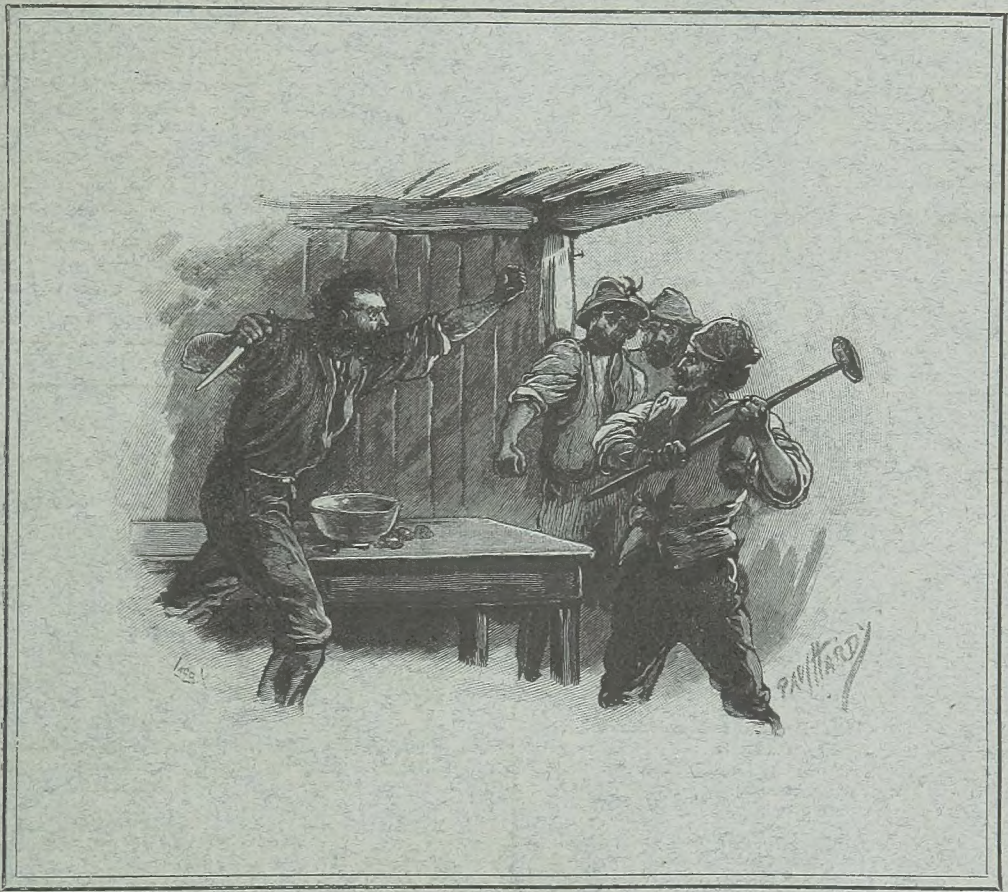


12623.k 24. 15

# ILLUSTRATED PENNY TALES.

FROM THE "STRAND" LIBRARY.

---



---

No. 10.—CONTAINING :—

WHY HE FAILED.

THE TOILERS OF THE ROCKS.

*Translated from Ferdinand de Saar.*

THE PRISONER OF ASSIOUT ... .. *By Grant Allen.*

---

PUBLISHED AT THE OFFICES OF "TIT-BITS."

GEORGE NEWNES, LIMITED, 8, 9, 10, & 11, SOUTHAMPTON STREET, AND EXETER STREET, STRAND, W.C.



**'THE SECRET OF HEALTH.'**

Written by a Diplômée of a London Hospital.

# LIFEBUOY



Books by  
Popular Authors  
Given with  
Lifebuoy Soap.

LIFEBUOY SOAP is a Carbolic Disinfectant Soap for use in the Prevention of Sickness and the Preservation of Health and is guaranteed perfectly pure and free from any injurious chemicals.

All purchasers of this soap can exchange the Wrappers, at the Dealer's from whom they buy the soap, for BOOKS.

A Copy of this Book will be sent to each user of LIFEBUOY SOAP who sends his or her name and address and 12 LIFEBUOY SOAP Wrappers, postage or carriage paid, to LEVER BROTHERS, Limited, Port Sunlight, near Birkenhead.

CONTENTS.—THE MISSING BAG: A Complete Story.—INTRODUCTION TO THE 'SECRET OF HEALTH'—GUIDE TO HOME NURSING—GUIDE TO NURSING IN INFECTIOUS ILLNESSES—OUR DUTY TO OUR NEIGHBOUR—CHOLERA: How to Prevent it—SPECIAL CHAPTER—A WORD OF WARNING—SICK DIET AND FEEDING THE SICK—USEFUL HINTS FOR HEADS OF FAMILIES.

LEVER BROS., Ltd., Port Sunlight, nr. Birkenhead, have received the accompanying Report on Lifebuoy Royal Disinfectant Soap from Dr. Karl Enoch, Chem. Hygien. Inst., Hamburg.

**REPORT.**

The examination of the sample of 'Lifebuoy Royal Disinfectant Soap' furnished to me by Messrs. Lever Brothers, Limited, of Port Sunlight, England, gives the following results as to its action as a disinfectant.

Solutions of 1, 2, and 5 per cent. of Lifebuoy Royal Disinfectant Soap in water were made. These solutions were brought to bear on a variety of clean cultivated germs or microbes (Bacillus), in each case a certain exact time being allowed for the operation; and thus the capacity of this soap for destroying the various live and growing germs was proved.

**THE RESULTS were as follows:—**

- 1.—The obstinate Typhoid Microbes, with the 5 per cent. solution, were dead within two hours.
- 2.—The operation of this soap on the Cholera Microbes was very remarkable, and showed this soap to be in the highest degree a disinfectant. These were taken from persons who had died of Cholera in Hamburg, and showed a result as follows:—  
With the 2 per cent. mixture, Cholera Microbes were dead within 15 minutes. With the 5 per cent. same were dead within 5 minutes.
- 3.—The Diphtheria Microbes were killed after 2 hours with the 5 per cent. solution.
- 4.—The 5 per cent. solution was tried on fresh Carbuncle germs, and the result showed that the Microbe life was entirely extinct after 4 hours.

From the foregoing experiments it will be seen that the Lifebuoy Royal Disinfectant Soap is a powerful disinfectant and exterminator of the various germs and microbes of disease.  
(Signed) KARL ENOCH, Chem., Hygien. Inst., Hamburg.

# Illustrated Penny Tales.

No. 9 contains:—

The Conscientious Burglar	By Grant Allen.
Catissou	By Jules Claretie.
The P. L. M. Express	By Jacques Normand.

With 19 Illustrations.

No. 8 contains:—

In the Midst of the Sea. By Countess Bice de Benvenuti.  
The Black Knight. By Raymond Allen.  
Lady Florry's Gems. By George Manville Fenn.  
With 18 Illustrations.

No. 7 contains:—

Laying a Ghost. By George Manville Fenn.  
Quixarvyn's Rival. By H. Greenbough Smith.  
Wife or Helpmeet? By Jeanne Mairat.  
With 18 Illustrations.

No. 6 contains:—

In the Interests of Science. From the German.  
Dr. Freston's Brother.  
Zodomirsky's Duel. By Alexandre Dumas.  
The Saving of Karl Reichenberg. By Arthur Page.  
With 18 Illustrations.

No. 5 contains:—

A Perilous Wooing. By Björnsterne Björnson.  
A Breach of Confidence. By Annie Armit.  
Woke up at Last. By Kate Lee.  
The Bundle of Letters. By Moritz Jokai.  
With 22 Illustrations.

No. 4 contains:—

An Eighteenth Century Juliet. By James Mortimer.  
A Thing that Glistened. By Frank R. Stockton.  
The Pistol Shot. From the Russian of Alexander Pushkin.  
With 17 Illustrations.

No. 3 contains:—

His Little Girl: Or, Worked Out. By Pleydell North.  
Professor Morgan's Romance. By Kate Lee.  
Two Fishers. From the French of Guy de Maupassant.  
With 18 Illustrations.

No. 2 contains:—

Making an Angel. By J. Harwood Panting.  
The Voice of Science. By A. Conan Doyle.  
The Spider's Web. By Jacques Normand.  
With 18 Illustrations.

No. 1 contains:—

A Deadly Dilemma. By Grant Allen.  
Slap-Bang. By Jules Claretie.  
The Minister's Crime. By J. Maclaren Cobban.  
With 19 Illustrations.

Numbers 1 to 9, containing 29 Stories, with 167 Illustrations, will be sent, post free, for Twelve Penny Stamps; or may be obtained to order from any Newsagent or Railway Bookstall.

GEORGE NEWNES, LIMITED, STRAND, W.C.



# Illustrated Penny Tales.

## Why He Failed.

HE threw away a great chance of success, and has been a happier man ever since.

There is no one but myself in England now who knows exactly how it happened, and as I was thinking over it to-night (something in the papers about a clever detective in New York brought it all fresh back to my mind) it seemed to me such a queer story altogether that I think it will interest others to know it.

I must just alter one or two of the names, that's all, because it is not so very long ago since it happened, and it came out in one or two papers at the time, but all more or less wide of the mark. None of them had just the rights of it.

You see, no one could make out how Allan got away so easily—no one knows except my friend and I, and one man over the seas, and not even the cutest Yankee could ever guess the truth.

It is stranger than fiction, as you will find. But this is the story.

I put it short enough, for writing is not in my line. I can think things out in my head, and turn them over and over, till there is not much left of them that has not been put through the sieve, so to speak; but when it comes to pen and ink, I'm a poor hand. It means sitting down indoors for hours, and that I am not used to. No, thank Heaven, I can earn my bread by something else, or very little bread would come to me, and no chance of butter or cheese.

This is not my story at all; I mean, not about my own life. It is about a friend of mine, George Markson.

If I told you his real name, you would probably remember at once; he was one of the best-known detectives of that time. Talk about five senses, George had ten at least. He could see round a case, and through a man, and into your mind almost, and tell you what you were thinking of, better than you knew yourself.

And all so quiet—you would not think he saw much, but he had seen everything at a glance, and forgotten nothing. I have known him look into a room that he had never seen before, and in the evening, when we were sitting together, he would describe that room, down to the maker's name on the clock, as minutely as if he were holding a picture of it in his hand at the time.

He worked on his own account, and he had constant and well-paid employment, since the day he tracked the man who robbed the bank of Westminster; you may remember the case—a daring daylight robbery.

He traced him after a long search to Paris, and spotted him there as a garçon in a café—a good disguise, too. George was in Spain after that for a long time, and then went to Cairo, so I did

not see him for more than a year. He came back with a reputation more brilliant than ever, and settled down into the same rooms he had shared with me before he left.

He was a middle-aged man when I knew him, and the severe mental strain of his employment, together with home troubles, made him seem older than he was.

His wife, to whom he had been much attached, had died many years before. His only son, too, had turned out badly, got into debt (the old story of a weak will influenced by bad companions), and then had emigrated to the gold diggings, and was believed to have died there, after a few more wasted years of riot and dissipation.

His father had built many hopes on his only son, and carried about an unhealed wound caused by the bitter disappointment of all his expectations.

At the time I am writing about, I saw there was something more than usual on George's mind.

He never talked much about what he was engaged in, and I took care never to plague him with questions; but it happened that a chum of mine, named Miles, told me that George had missed a good clue, and that another man, named Smollett, was beginning to make a name, and was now bent on outdoing George.

Once run to earth someone whom George had failed to trace, and his reputation was secure.

To outshine one of the best men then at work was a high game to try for, but Smollett was trying no less.

Not long after I met Miles again in Oxford Street. He told me that Smollett had scored again, and that George had missed a find he had made pretty sure of.

I pooh-poohed the whole thing.

"Chance, all chance. Fine thing for Smollett, more luck than good management, no doubt," I said, feeling rather nettled, I own. "Wait a bit; you will see which is the best man of the two."

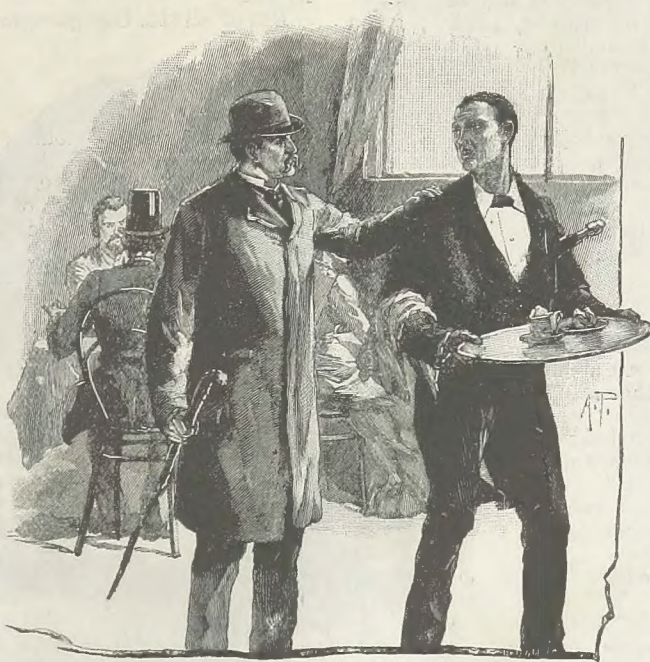
"I'll back Sm——" said Miles, but he remembered that George was my friend, and said no more.

I came across Miles in very nearly the same place next day. "Heard the latest?" he shouted, and then proceeded to explain that a forger, who had been wanted for some time, was supposed to be in London, and that a large reward was offered for him.

"Both on the war trail this time," said Miles. "Which will be the best man now, eh? Getting exciting, isn't it?"

That evening George, who had been out all day, came quickly into the room soon after six.

I knew by his look that he was employed on some important mission. His brows were drawn down into a single straight line, and his lips were firmly pressed together.



"A GOOD DISGUISE, TOO."

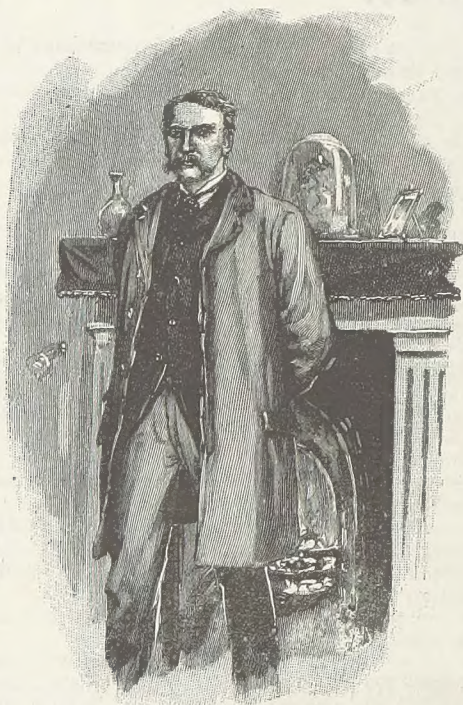


He stood for some time on the hearth-rug, evidently deep in thought. He had not removed his top-coat.

"Are you off again?" I remarked.

He looked up suddenly. "Going to drive to Holloway," he said. "Will you come?"

I knew by this that he would tell me more of his errand. I rose at once. He looked at his watch.



"HE STOOD FOR SOME TIME DEEP IN THOUGHT."

"The cab will be round here in a few minutes," he said, quickly. "I'll tell you what it is, Tom: if I miss this, I shall give up this work altogether. I have not been very lucky lately, old man, though I have not worried you about my affairs."

"They never worry me," I began; "I only wish you—"

"I know, I know," he interrupted, kindly; "you think your back is broad enough to carry my cares as well as yours; but you shall never have mine to bother you, Tom, while you have got any of your own. This is the thing you have heard of"—and then he went on to tell me the details of the case that Miles had referred to.

"I came across the track this afternoon," he said, "and now it's only a question of time."

He drew a deep breath of relief, and threw his shoulders back. "I *did* make a mess of that last thing, and that makes me more keen about this. You see, there's another man" (I knew he meant Smollett) "who would give a good bit to get hold of this job before me, but there's not much fear of my losing it now."

He smiled as he spoke, and looked more hopeful than he had done for a long time.

We said nothing more, and drove off.

It was a wet, cold night, and I was glad when the cab stopped, and we left it at the corner of a shabby-looking side street.

"Third door on the right," said George, partly to himself, "past the coal yard, over the butcher's. You wait here for two minutes, Tom; if I am not down then, you follow me. Back room on the top of staircase. I may want you. Don't stand in the wet. Here's a doorway to shelter in."

At the end of two minutes, I was climbing quietly up the narrow, dark staircase. No sound of voices anywhere.

"Bird's flown. Bad luck to him," I thought. "Awfully hard on George, poor fellow."

I was at the top when suddenly there came the sound (so seldom heard) of a man's voice broken by sobs, striving to speak quickly and coherently.

"Ah! found it's no go, confessing his sins," I smiled to myself, and pushed the door ajar.

Ah! how could I have known George's voice, always so quiet, so self-controlled? How could I recognise George himself, kneeling on the floor, by the side of a poor, miserable bed, holding in his arms the figure of a man. A head was resting on his shoulder, while his tears fell fast upon the thin, white face of the man lying upon the bed.

"Come, my boy, no time to lose. You know me? Bob, dear, quick, say you know me—your father, Bob, it's only your father; you must get out of this. No one knows but me, Bob; no one will know, no one will follow you—quick, quick!" And with a sob in his throat, he turned round and saw me.

He had forgotten my existence, but now seemed to think that I knew everything.

No explanation that this was his lost son, whom he had tracked to earth, and whose discovery was to bring him so much credit. No thought of the object for which he had come. The detective was not there; in his place stood a broken-hearted father, with but one thought in his mind: how best to get his unhappy son out of the reach of the law which had so nearly caught him.

"Come," he cried, in a hoarse whisper, to me, "help him to stand, he is weak; we must arrange for him."

I had looked round the place. The squalid poverty of the uncleaned room, the well-worn pack of cards lying on the chair by the bed, the empty bottle on the other side, and the stale smell of spirits and tobacco in the room, all told the same tale, and bore silent but unmistakable witness to the complete mastery of evil habits.

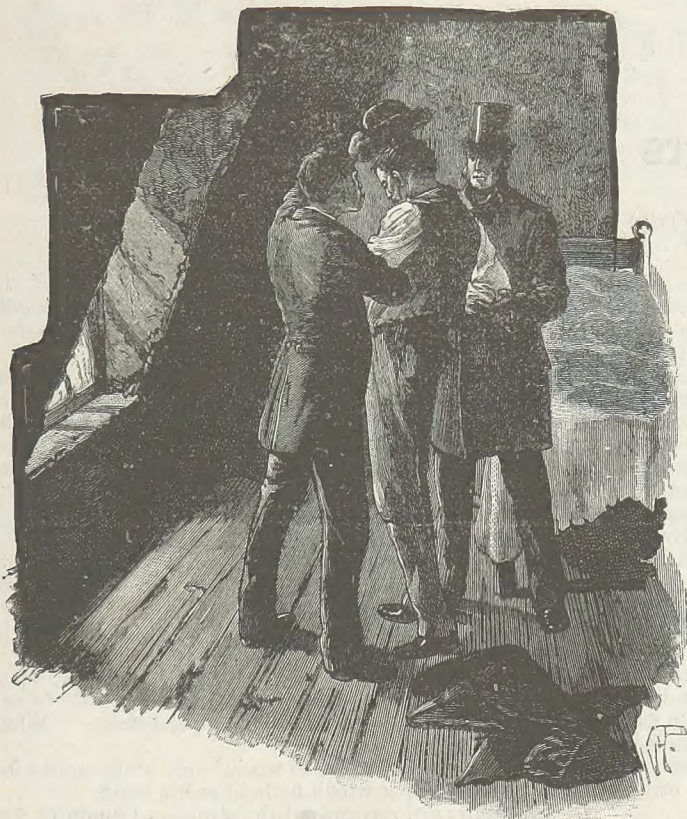
But of all this George seemed to see nothing.



"HOLDING IN HIS ARMS THE FIGURE OF A MAN."







"HE SEEMED TOO DAZED TO SPEAK."

The sharp-searching scrutiny of the detective had given place to the loving look of a father, to whom all forgiveness was possible.

With hasty hands he had taken off his hat, great-coat, and scarf, and was now hurriedly putting them on the figure, who offered no help, and who seemed too dazed and bewildered to speak.

"Here is money, my boy," he whispered, in a husky voice; "it is all I have now, but you shall have more; and here, take care of this," hurriedly writing a few words upon a scrap of paper. "See, I put it in the breast-pocket with the purse. It is the name of a house at Liverpool. Stay there till you hear from me, and then you shall get right away from this. There is a cab waiting at the corner; tell him to drive to the nearest station. You follow me, Bob—you understand what I have said? The money is here in this pocket. Now quick! If anyone—" I read the thought in his heart. What if someone had come on the clue which had helped *him*, and should be already on the way? Is that a foot on the stair? No, all is quiet.

"Now go—I dare not go with you. Do not lose a moment. Downstairs, and then to the left. Tell him to drive fast. God bless you, Bob!" and following him to the head of the stair with broken utterances of endearment and caution, George watched the unsteady figure descend the steps, and listened with strained ears until he caught the sound of wheels driving rapidly away.

We waited for what seemed to me a long, long time, in a silence which I dared not break. And then we went out into the wet and deserted street.

We stopped at the corner where the cab had waited; and I watched my friend as he stood under the gas-lamp, looking out into the darkness with a far-away look in his eyes, not knowing, or at least not heeding, that the rain was beating upon his uncovered head.

There is a better smile on his face now than the

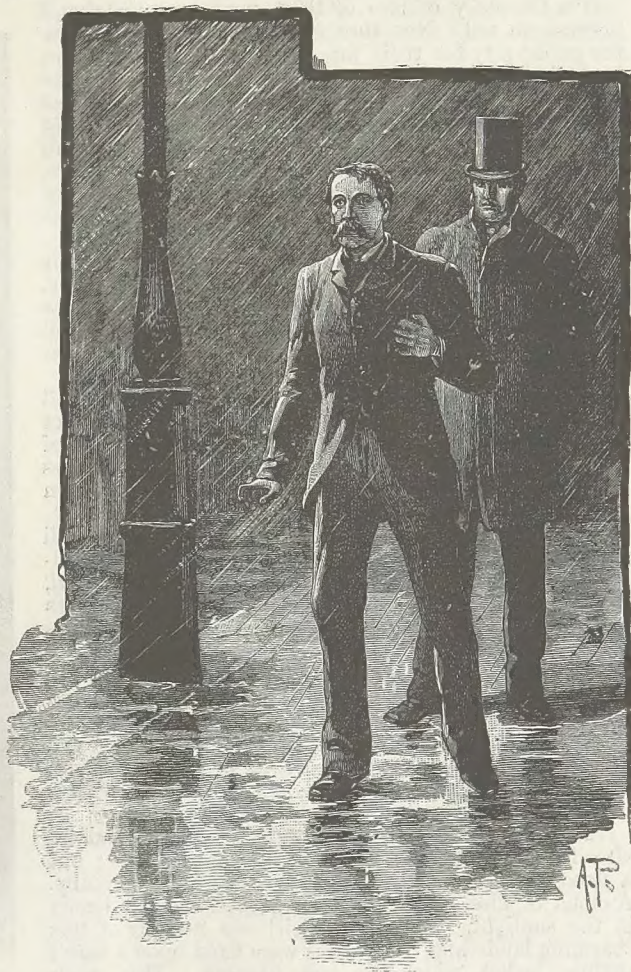
smile he wore early in the evening at the thought of his coming success. His reputation would suffer greatly, beyond doubt, but what is that to him?

He stands there a defeated—and a happy man.

I always meet Miles when I want to keep out of his way. So I was not surprised to come across him next day, walking by the Horse Guards.

"Ha, ha!" he shouted, boisterously, before we had well met. "Queer go, wasn't it? What was? You haven't heard from Markson? Oh, of course, he would be as mute as a fish. Hard lines on him, too, when he had got the whole thing as neat as could be. Went to the very house yesterday where Allan was. The man at the pub. saw him go into the house. Ha! ha! what does my lord Allan do? Awfully sharp fellow! Lets himself down by a rope out of the back window, and goes off in Markson's own cab—not bad, ha! ha! ha! Markson rushed after him too late. Smollett is furious that he was just out of it. He found out where Allan was hiding, and came on the scene a day behind the fair. Pity he did not get the chance. He'd have nailed him. Everyone says that Markson has made an awful mull of it, and now the fellow has got clean away, no one knows where. Who's the best man now? You can't say much for your side, Tom."

As I watched him stride away towards the park, I thought: "Yes, but thank God, Smollett did *not* get the chance."





# The Toilers of the Rocks.

*Translated from Ferdinand de Saar.*

## I.

ONE of the most remarkable railways in the world is that which crosses the Semmering—a ridge belonging to the Noric Alps which marks the frontier between Austria and Styria the Green.

The traveller who makes this journey for the first time receives a deep and lasting impression. In truth, what can be more terrible, more striking, than the narrow track running at infinite heights between beetling walls and yawning precipices?—what more impressive than the carriages rolling with a crash like thunder over viaducts elevated to fabulous heights, or burying themselves to the shrill scream of the locomotive in the deep night of the long tunnels?

The air is cold—freezing. The train is swept along as by a whirlwind. The earth below is so far away that it can hardly be distinguished through the half-transparent mists. In the midst of scenes and works of such sublimity man realizes his own insignificance. But little thought is given to the thousands of poor people who amidst the greatest dangers have spent their strength in hauling the enormous rocks and blocks of stone, in spanning the gigantic gulfs with bridges, and in bringing their Titanic task to a successful issue.

It is the story of two of these poor creatures that I propose to tell. Not that my intention is to excite the public pity for their fate, or to idealize their lives. I shall simply strive to shed a little light upon the immense mass of the suffering poor who, after a life of struggle, of privations, and of rude labour, sink, despised and unremembered, into the common tomb. I shall speak of the human heart, of its joys and its sorrows, and of the great tragedy of life which is renewed for ever amongst the humblest as among the most powerful of the earth.

The Semmering Railway was almost finished. The hubbub of the labourers, the thunder of the blasting, had ceased. The swarm of workpeople who had come from Bohemia, from Moravia, from sterile Karst and fertile Frioul, had dispersed, and had pushed on farther south in search of work.

Reassured by the tranquillity of the place, the wild animals began to come forth again from the depths of the forest. Only here and there were still seen some of the little wooden huts which the wandering labourers had inhabited; most of which they had pulled down before they left.

These scattered cabins served as a shelter to a small number of workers who still remained to finish the railway; for still, at certain places, rails had to be fixed, telegraph poles to be placed, and the pointsmen's boxes to be completed, under the roofs of which the swallows had already made their nests.

One Sunday afternoon, a girl was sitting upon the threshold of one of these little huts, which stood against the rock, near the line. Her hair was half hidden by a coarse scarf twisted round it; her face was worn and old-looking, and contrasted with her girlish figure. Deep lines crossed her forehead, and drew down with a mournful expression the corners of her lips.

The sun was sinking at the horizon. Great shadows already wrapped the valley and the forest pines; but a flood of living light bathed the highest summits. A cloud of flies, of butterflies and bees, whirled dizzily in the sunlight. The solitary girl saw nothing of this charming landscape. Her eyes were fixed upon a man's shabby jacket which she was darning. This work

appeared to be particularly difficult to her, for if the coarse and horny hand that awkwardly held the needle was examined, it was easy to see that it was accustomed to handle the hoe and spade.

Suddenly the young woman's attention was attracted by the sound of footsteps. She lifted her head, and perceived a man of miserable aspect advancing towards the cabin.

He was slight and insignificant in figure, and was clothed in an old military coat with flapping skirts, too loose and too long for him. A soldier's cap, blue and greasy, was pulled down over his forehead to his eyes. He staggered as he walked, and to sustain himself he leant upon a knotty stick, although the little sack which he carried slung across his back appeared almost empty. He approached timidly, and looked helplessly at the young girl out of his weak eyes.

"Is this hut Number 7?" he asked, in a faltering tone.

"Yes, this is it," she replied, with the harsh accent peculiar to the Germans of Central Bohemia. "What do you want?"

"I have been sent here to work," and, as he spoke, he showed her a paper which he held in his hand.

The young girl scrutinized the strange costume of her



"IS THIS HUT NUMBER 7?"



questioner, and his thin white face with its straggling beard.

"The overseer is not here at present," she said at last. "He has gone down to the tavern at Schottwein with the men. Rest yourself whilst you wait, if you are tired." She cast a last glance upon the poor creature, who appeared to be in suffering, and then returned to her interrupted work, drawing the needle with renewed haste.

The soldier did not reply. He dragged himself a little farther away, and let himself fall upon the grass with a great sigh of weariness. He lay there at full length, whilst the sun sank more and more at the horizon, pouring over the whole scene its liquid golden light. A deep silence reigned. Far above in the azure sky a solitary vulture wheeled, uttering its piercing cry. Very soon from the distance came the bellowing of drunken voices. The girl trembled.

"Heavens!" she murmured, speaking to herself. "They are already returning, and the jacket is not done!"

The voices became more and more distinct, the howlings stronger, and in a few minutes a band of individuals of savage aspect burst upon the scene. In the midst of them, and rather better clothed than his companions, a man of herculean figure caught the eye. He was about fifty years of age. His big face was red and swollen by drink, and from under his straw hat, which was tilted backwards on his head, escaped a tangled mass of greish hair. On his left shoulder was slung his coat, which he had taken off; his right arm, with its powerful muscles displayed by the turned-up sleeve, carried a great pannier filled with provisions. Two of his companions were loaded with heavy sacks full of potatoes, which were hoisted on their shoulders.

"Hallo! Tertschka," cried the man with the basket, in a hoarse voice, "give us a light, so that we can put our provisions in the cellar."

As she stood before him his eye fell upon the unfinished jacket, which she held timidly against her breast.

"Well, is it done?" he asked, abruptly.

"Not quite," she replied, in some confusion.

"What, not done yet?" he cried, so fiercely that his face grew purple. "Did I not tell you that I should want it to-morrow?"

"I have worked at it all the afternoon. But I cannot darn it as quickly as someone who has learnt to sew."

The reproach contained in these plaintive words appeared to increase his irritation.

"You have always an answer ready," he cried. "But if at daybreak to-morrow my jacket is not finished, take care of yourself!"

He put down his basket of provisions and strode towards her, menacing her with a terrible gesture. She shrank back from the blow, and at that moment he caught sight of the man in the soldier's coat, who had timidly drawn near.

"Who is this?" he demanded, letting his hand fall.

"He has been sent here to work," replied Tertschka, breathlessly.

The overseer, for it was he, drew himself up to his full height and advanced towards the wretched little creature, measuring him from head to foot.

"Bah! to work! The rascal cannot even stand upon his legs."

"I have come a long journey," said the stranger, hesitating. "I have walked here from Otterthal."

"That is a feat, no doubt," sneered the overseer, scanning in the twilight the paper which the young man held out with a shaking hand. "You are called Huber?" he asked, after a pause.

"Yes, George Huber."

"And why do you wear a soldier's uniform?"

"I have been in the army and have been discharged."

"What, you have been in the army?"

"Seven years in the 12th Regiment. I have been dismissed now because I cannot get rid of a bad fever which I caught during the siege of Venice."

"Good heavens! Fever! This is the last straw! The devil must be in the Government that sends us such fellows. We get nothing but invalids to make stone-breakers of. And then people are astonished that no work is done. As for you," he added, with another threatening gesture, "take care, for if you fail to do your two cart-loads of gravel daily, I shall send you packing. This is not a hospital, remember!"

Thereupon he picked up his basket and, followed by his companions, entered the cabin. Tertschka led the way, holding in her hand a brand lighted at the fire. A door barred with iron led into a sort of grotto hollowed in the rock, in which the provisions were stored. The overseer then retired to rest in an adjacent room; upon which the labourers stretched themselves, yawning, here and there upon the floor, and without troubling themselves about their new comrade, prepared to sleep upon the old straw mattresses which were ranged against the walls.

George all this time stood irresolute by the door. In a few minutes Tertschka came towards him.

"You can sleep there," she said, pointing with her hand to a vacant place.

He obeyed her awkwardly, screwing himself together so as to take up as little space as possible. After making a pillow of his sack and covering himself with his old coat, which he had taken off, he uttered a great sigh of weariness and composed himself to sleep. Tertschka lighted a little lamp, and crouching down by the fire, began to sew with feverish haste. When she had finished her work, she extinguished the smoky flame, and stretched herself, dressed as she was, in a corner near the chimney.

Outside, the night was blue and balmy—a summer's night in all its splendour. A cool wind blew. From the interior of the hut, whence could be heard the deep breathing of the sleepers, myriads of stars sparkled through the disjointed planks and crannies of the roof.

## II.

THE dawn was already beginning to whiten the horizon when George awoke from his deep sleep. He watched the workmen quit their meagre couches; rise and pass out, furnishing themselves as they did so with all sorts of tools which were hanging on the walls of the cabin. He followed their example, and after putting on his coat, stood hesitating in what direction to proceed in search of his work, when Tertschka came up to him, carrying on her shoulder a long-handled hammer.

"The overseer is still asleep," she said, "but I know what you have to do. Take this hammer and come with me."

He obeyed her, and they went out together.

Outside, all was cool and peaceful. Only now and then a bird twittered in the bushes. The grass was heavy with clear dew.

They walked silently along. After some distance they came upon a stone quarry, where several of the men were at work, whilst the rest were busy upon the line, with wheelbarrows and spades. Tertschka, followed by George, passed these groups, and paused at a heap of stones.

"This is my place," she said, seating herself on the middle of a pile of stones. "I never care to remain near the men. They are coarse and wicked; but if you like, you can work here."

He made no reply, but sat down at her side.

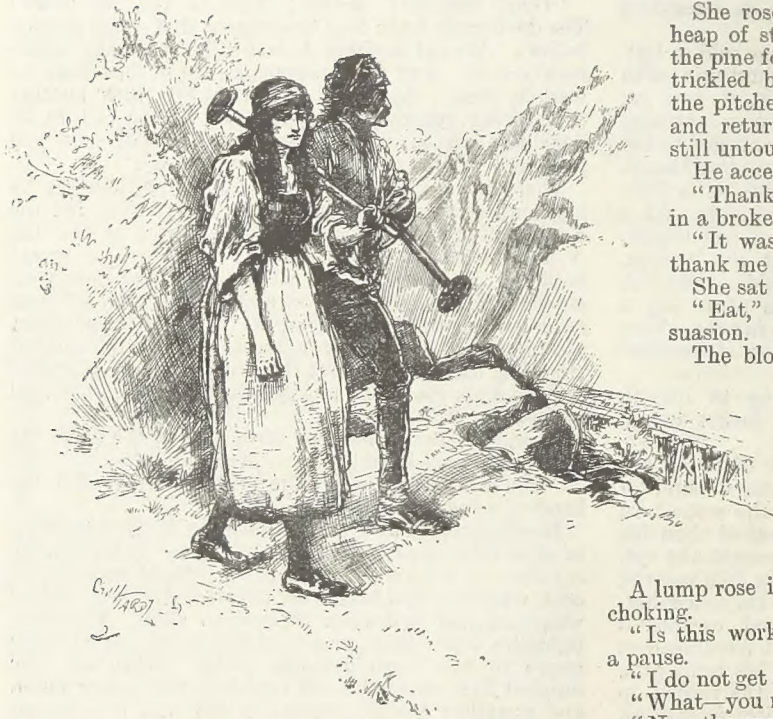
"See, these great fragments of rock must be broken into tiny pieces. There," she added, pointing to a great heap of fine gravel, "is my last week's work."

He took a piece of limestone, and struck it with his hammer, but the stone remained unbroken.

"Strike harder," cried Tertschka. This time she struck it in her turn, and the rock flew into fragments. He watched her in amazement, and after making a second attempt was rewarded with success. Then, without saying a word, both devoted themselves to their task.

All around them lay stretched a wild but charming





"THEY WENT OUT TOGETHER."

scene of hill and valley. But the workpeople did not pause in their labour to admire its beauties. With stooping shoulders they struck and broke their stones, whilst the sun, now mounting in the heavens, beat down with scorching heat upon their unsheltered heads. The strokes of George's hammer became fainter and fainter, and at last the tool fell from his hand. He began to fan himself with his cap, and to dry the moisture which streamed down his face. Tertschka stopped also.

"Are you tired already?" she asked, surveying him compassionately.

"Ah! Heaven only knows how tired," he replied, in a dreary voice. "It is only now that I begin to feel how low the fever has brought me."

"Feeble and ill as you are, how could you accept work so hard and rude as ours?"

"What else remained for me to do? To beg? Not that, at any rate. I had learnt no trade. In my nineteenth year I was placed in the army. Now I am ill, they send me here to break stones. Yes, now I am a stone-breaker," he said, with a smile frightful in its bitterness. He picked up his hammer.

Tertschka stood silent with drooping head.

"But you will never be able to stand it," she said at last, in a low voice.

"Oh! yes, perhaps, when I get food to eat; these last days have been very hard for me. I have eaten nothing since yesterday morning."

She made no reply, but slowly unwrapped and took out of her apron a piece of black bread, which she broke into two parts. She held out to him the largest of the two pieces.

"Eat," she said.

He glanced timidly at the piece she offered him.

"But—it is your bread," he replied, in confusion. And he made a gesture of refusal.

"That does not matter. I have quite enough for myself."

As he made no movement to accept it, she placed the bread by his side.

"You must be thirsty also," she continued. "I will go and fetch you some water; there is a stream hard by."

She rose, took a small pitcher fixed among a heap of stones, and ascended the quarry towards the pine forest, where a tiny rill of limpid water trickled between tufts of green moss. She filled the pitcher and drank, and then filled it again, and returned with it. The piece of bread was still untouched.

He accepted the cool draught with gratitude.

"Thank you very much—very much," he said, in a broken voice, when he had finished drinking.

"It was done willingly; there is nothing to thank me for."

She sat down again.

"Eat," she continued, in a tone of sweet persuasion. "You can surely accept that of me."

The blood rushed to his face, and he took up the bread.

"Surely you, who are so kind-hearted, must also have been unhappy," he said, without looking at her, and breaking off a piece of bread.

"Yes, I know what it is to be unhappy; and I am often hungry myself."

A lump rose in his throat, and he felt as if he were choking.

"Is this work so badly paid then?" he asked, after a pause.

"I do not get paid at all."

"What—you receive no wages?"

"No; the overseer takes charge of them."

"The overseer?"

"He is my step-father."

"Your step-father?" he repeated, mechanically.

"Yes; my father was killed when I was quite little. Then my mother married the overseer, who at that time was simply a labourer. We all came hither from Bohemia."

"Then you are a native of Bohemia? and that is why you speak such a strange dialect, and why you have such a singular name? Tert—I cannot pronounce it."

"Tertschka," she repeated. "In German it is the same as Theresa; for short, I am called Resi."

"But," he continued, "if the overseer receives your wages, it is his duty to maintain you."

"Oh! he gives me just enough to keep me from starvation. He is a bad man. He beats me continually. You saw him, how he threatened me yesterday about his jacket?"

She paused, plunged in mournful remembrances.

"But if he illtreats you like that, why do you stay here?"

"I know that he would never let me go," she replied.

"Some poor, defenceless being is always necessary to him, to torment with impunity. For he is a coward, though always ready to quarrel. And then, where should I go?" she continued, with a sigh. "Everywhere, life is sad. Everywhere, there is suffering."

So saying, she picked up her hammer, and George, feeling a little more revived, followed her example. Silently they returned to their work.

The hours rolled on; the heat of noon spread into the valley and upon the mountain. All was quiet, except for the regular heavy strokes of the hammers, and the tapping of the woodpecker in the branches. From time to time the hoarse voices of the men occupied on the line were heard, bursting into some brief refrain.

Suddenly the shrill tinkle of a bell rang out.

"What is that?" asked George, seeing the workpeople leaving their work and proceeding in the direction of the cabin.

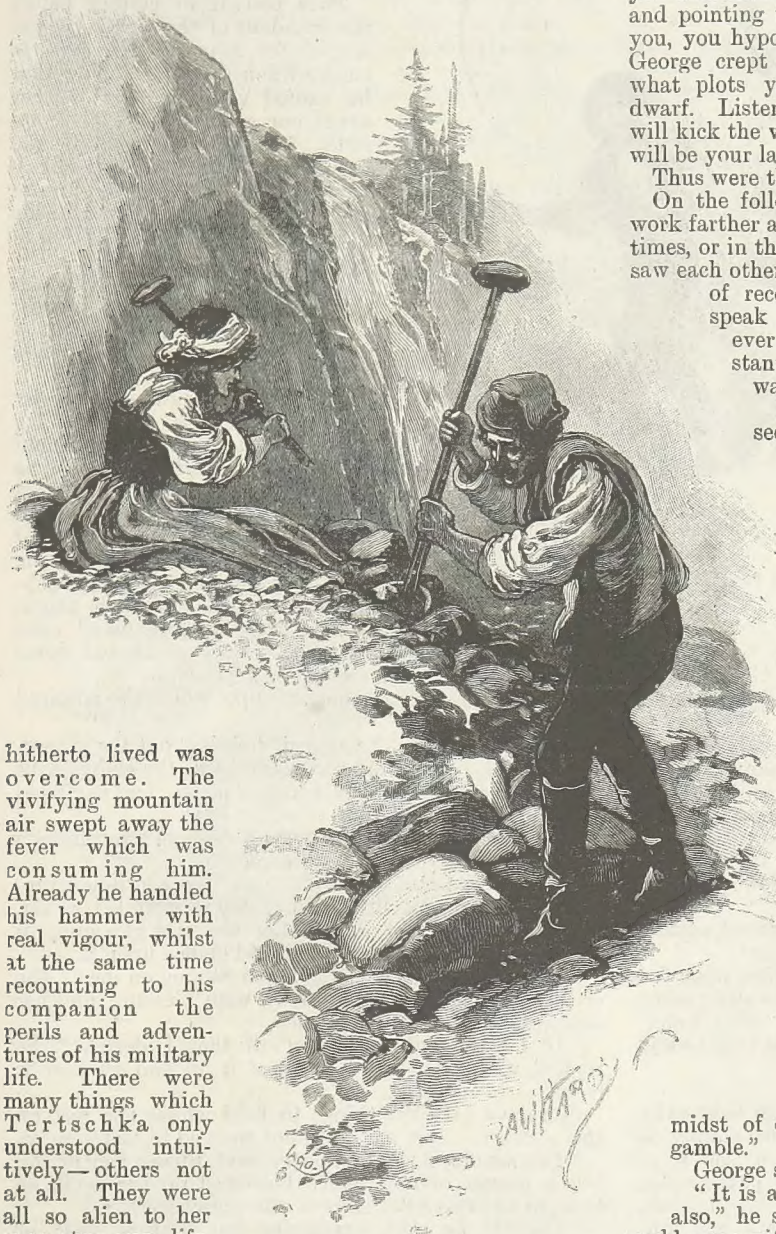
"It is the dinner-bell," replied Tertschka. "Come, let us go."

He rose and followed her in silence. After finishing their meagre meal they returned together to the quarry, where they continued their hard toil until night fell.



## III.

THUS days followed days, and they worked together side by side. George began to pick up his strength with amazing rapidity. The wretchedness in which he had



"THEY WORKED SIDE BY SIDE."

hitherto lived was overcome. The vivifying mountain air swept away the fever which was consuming him. Already he handled his hammer with real vigour, whilst at the same time recounting to his companion the perils and adventures of his military life. There were many things which Tertschka only understood intuitively—others not at all. They were all so alien to her monotonous life, passed amidst the solitude of the great mountains. One thing she seized clearly, and that was that George had suffered. She began to tell him in return her own sad life and all its unhappiness. These long days of toil, passed side by side under the high, scorching sun, became very sweet to them both. They started each morning at day-break to the quarry, and when the bell rang at meal-time, they were loth to be torn from their solitude and pleasant companionship, to endure the coarse jests and savage humour of the other occupants of the hut.

But, alas! These days when mutual friendship was beginning to heal their wounds, and to soothe their poor bruised hearts, were not to last.

Whether the overseer had been informed of their intimacy by some vindictive companion, or his own evil nature made him divine the pleasure they took in each

other's society, they never knew. But suddenly one day they perceived him standing behind them.

"What are you always doing here together, like two toads?" he bellowed. "Begone to your proper place, you famished scarecrow," he cried, turning to George, and pointing to another part of the quarry. "As for you, you hypocrite," he continued to Tertschka, whilst George crept silently away, "I should like to know what plots you are contriving with that wretched dwarf. Listen: if I see you speaking to him again, I will kick the vagabond out of the place, and that day will be your last; you understand?"

Thus were the two poor creatures brutally separated.

On the following day, George received an order to work farther away, near the line. It was only at meal-times, or in the evening after the sun had set, that they saw each other; and then they dared not give a glance of recognition. Harder still, they could not speak a single word, for the overseer's eye was ever on them, and they were under the constant surveillance of their companions, who watched them with mocking smiles.

It was Saturday evening, and the overseer, accompanied by some of the labourers, had gone to the tavern. Those who remained sat down to a game of cards, and soon became absorbed in handling the greasy pack. Presently they began to quarrel. Now was his time. George stepped softly over to Tertschka. The young girl was sitting in a corner on an old box, lost in thought.

"Why has he separated us like this?" he asked. "Surely it cannot matter to him if we sit together, as long as we do our work?"

She looked straight before her with a mournful expression.

"He is a wicked man," she said at last. "He cannot bear to see anyone happy. He would like to deprive everyone of every pleasure."

She rose and, lifting up the lid of the box, began to take out some articles of clothing.

"What are you going to do?" George asked, watching her.

"I have a great desire to go to-morrow to the church at Schottwein. There is no doubt I shall have great difficulty in obtaining permission from him. But let him say what he likes, I must not forget my religion in the

midst of creatures who do nothing but drink and gamble."

George stood musing, with bowed head.

"It is a very long time since I went to church also," he said. "How delightful it would be if I could come with you."

"But it is impossible."

"Why? The overseer will know nothing. Let us each start separately and meet afterwards."

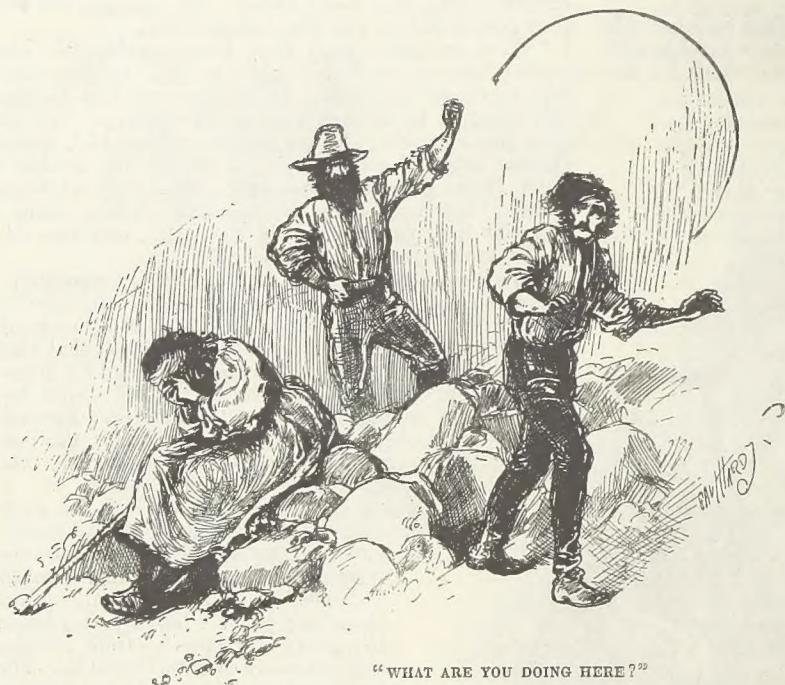
She reflected for an instant.

"It might be managed. In that case, you must start before I do. Listen! On issuing from this cabin, there is a little pathway to the right, which leads into the valley, and at the bottom of the path a wooden cross. Wait for me there. Now go," she added, in an imploring voice, "or we shall be observed."

George went back and threw himself upon his couch, whilst the players roared and squabbled over their cards. He felt quite light-hearted and joyous in thinking of the morrow, and, absorbed in pleasant anticipations, he soon fell asleep.

The next day was magnificent. A bright sun glittered through the pine trees as George descended the narrow green path that Tertschka had pointed out to him. He peered about for the cross which he was to find at the





"WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?"

entrance to the valley. Soon he caught sight of its brown, worm-eaten wood among the young beech leaves. As he was there in good time, he sat down upon a large, mossy stone which served as a *prie-dieu*.

A deep silence reigned; the stillness of a Sabbath day. Even the bees, which were plundering the many-coloured petals of the flowers, seemed to restrain their drowsy hum. The moss was starred with blue gentians.

At length he started up impatiently, and began to walk up and down. He gathered some of the gentians, and also some white and some yellow flowers which gleamed amid the grass.

"I will give them to Tertschka," he murmured, casting a complacent glance at his improvised bouquet.

At last he caught the gleam of a light dress upon the hill. Some seconds after he saw Tertschka descending the pathway. He hastened to meet her. "Here I am," she said, out of breath. "I have been able to get away this time without hindrance."

George stood gazing at her.

Her head was bare; the scarf which she habitually wore was gone, and her thick hair was parted simply on her forehead. A crimson kerchief which she wore around her neck cast a soft flush upon her pale cheeks, and her sober-coloured bodice, though too large for her, and her striped petticoat of muslin, were not unbecoming.

"How pretty you look!" he said, at last.

She cast down her eyes and blushed.

"Take these flowers," George continued. "I plucked them whilst I was waiting for you."

She took the bouquet which he had until then held behind his back, and tried to fasten it in her bodice, but it was too large, and so she continued to hold it in her hand, together with her rosary. They went on together down the mossy path and on through the cornfields, where the newly-reaped wheat stood in great sheaves of burnished gold.

At length they reached the hamlet of Schottwein. They found it in a state of great animation. It was mass day; the long, wide street which composed the village was thronged with all sorts of vehicles and with peasants clothed in their holiday garb. Opposite the church stalls were standing, crammed with every kind of goods for sale in rich variety—shawls of gay colours, cotton handkerchiefs, pipes, knives, glass bead necklaces,

imitation coral ornaments, were piled side by side with cooking utensils, gingerbread, and children's toys.

They paused in ecstasy before the grandeur of the sight. George longed for a pipe. He used to smoke when a soldier. Now that he gained a living, and neither drank nor gambled with his comrades, he could well afford the luxury. He asked Tertschka's advice, and she encouraged him to buy one. Whilst he made his purchase, Tertschka strolled on in advance.

George elbowed his way through the crowd of loafers who pressed around the stall, and bought a pretty porcelain pipe, embellished with tassels and a silken cord.

A brilliant necklace of amber beads caught his fancy. He imagined how pretty it would look on Tertschka's neck. The stall-keeper asking him but a moderate sum, it was soon wrapped in paper and in his pocket. And next, out of the change of the florin which he had given in payment, George bought at a neighbouring stall a gingerbread cake

in the shape of a heart. He finally purchased some tobacco, and hastened on to join Tertschka.

He began by showing her the pipe, which she admired exceedingly.

"This is for you," he added, holding out the gingerbread heart. The heart was stamped in the centre with another heart, red, thrust with an arrow, and encircled with a garland of flowers.

She slipped it with a pleasant smile of gratification between her bouquet and her rosary.

"I have something else for you," he continued, presently, drawing the little packet slowly from his pocket, half opening it, and letting her see the gleaming of the yellow beads. She cast a rapid glance upon it.

"How could you spend so much money on me?" she cried. But her face was all rosy with pleasure, and her eyes sparkled with innocent joy.

"If I could only give you all that I desire!" he replied, with emotion. "But put it on and see how it looks."

She gave him her things to hold whilst she put on the necklace. But she could not succeed in fastening it.

"Let me do it," said George, and lifting gently the heavy masses of hair which clustered on her neck, he brought the two little ends of the snap together.

"There!" he said, examining her with a look of satisfaction.

They continued their route and soon came in sight of the little chapel standing in a cluster of lime trees.

Tertschka knelt down in the last row of benches, and placed her flowers and gingerbread before her. George stood erect behind her. He was much affected by that scene, so calm, so still. A mellow light streamed down through the lofty arched windows. But he could not pray. His eyes were fixed constantly upon that kneeling figure with bowed head and murmuring lips before him.

The mass ended. The priest blessed the congregation as they passed out; but still she knelt. At length she rose, and, followed by George, advanced to the door, where the impatient verger was shaking his bunch of keys. Outside, the sun was glittering through the green foliage.

"Come," said Tertschka, "let us go and sit down."

They proceeded towards a forest of young pine trees which fringed the meadows. A little hill, carpeted with soft moss, provided them with a seat, from which they



looked down upon the village inn at their feet. They gazed with interest. The little inn was *en fête*. A merry wedding party were celebrating their happiness before the entrance, under a great beech tree, which spread its branches above their heads. Strains of music, softened by the distance, presently stole upon their ears. They saw the bridal pair advance and begin dancing upon the greensward to the music.

"How gaily they dance," cried Tertschka. "Do look at them."

"Yes, they are happy," he replied, dreamily. "If only we could celebrate our marriage too!"

"Oh! what are you saying?" she murmured, almost inaudibly; and, stooping down, she plucked a red flower in the grass at her feet.

"Resi!" he whispered—he called her by this name for the first time—and at the same moment he passed



"RESI!" HE WHISPERED.

his arm timidly about the young girl's waist. "Resi, if you knew how much I love you!"

She made no answer, but she raised her eyes and fixed them upon his. In the lovelight of their depths he read his happiness. He drew her gently to his heart, and their lips met for the first time in one long kiss of love.

#### IV.

SINCE I have undertaken the task of narrating this simple story as faithfully as possible, must I describe to you the dream of happiness in which our lovers lived from that day? I think it will be wise for me to pass it by in silence. What words can render the exquisite joys of a passion so pure as theirs?

It is true that they were compelled to conceal their happiness from all eyes, trembling with fear lest it should be discovered, as if they had been guilty of a crime. But in their secret hearts their passion thrived and flourished.

The fear that the overseer should learn of their visit to Schottwein diminished little by little; so much so that one day George, having gone to that part of the quarry where Tertschka was working, took the opportunity to snatch a few minutes by her side. For a little while the lovers

forgot their woes in a passionate embrace; but almost at the same moment they heard the sound of rapid steps behind them. They started instantly apart, and perceived the overseer, who, with an evil smile upon his lips and his face purple with rage, stood gazing at them.

"Ha! so I have caught you this time, you wretched creatures!" he hissed forth. "This is the way you obey my orders! And you think I do not see your little game! I know well that you were together last Sunday, but I wanted to surprise you in the act. You shall pay for this." As he spoke, he seized George by the throat, and, with a savage shake, threw him with such force upon the ground that the dust and stones flew up around him.

"Take away your load of stones, you gallows-bird! then pack, and be off. If ever I catch you prowling about here again, I will break every bone in your body!"

He kicked the poor fellow as he raised himself painfully; then following him to his cart, he drove him to the road with blows.

Then he came back and glared at Tertschka with a ferocious glance of hatred. "As for you," he said, "we will settle our account by-and-by."

Muttering and growling to himself, he strode away.

Stunned and blinded by the shock, George had rejoined his comrades. He emptied his cart mechanically, and sitting down upon a stone, gazed before him with thoughts far away. Since the morning the day had become dull and the sky covered with clouds. A biting autumn wind whistled in the tops of the pine trees. Suddenly the rain came down. But George never felt the icy drops which beat upon his face. Sparks danced before his eyes, and a shiver ran through his frame. Shame at the treatment he had undergone, mixed with the burning injustice which Tertschka, as well as himself, was enduring, brought the angry blood to his face. And now he was dismissed—separated from Tertschka—from that which was to him the most precious thing in all the world. The more he reflected, the more his shame and rage increased. His timid and patient nature was stung to revolt, and he felt within him a new-born strength to struggle, to resist, to conquer any obstacles which should rise to separate him from his betrothed. Gradually his dejected countenance assumed a terrible expression, and his eyes shone with a strange lustre.

He rose and took his way towards the little hill where Tertschka worked. His companions eyed him curiously. He found Tertschka sitting on the ground in tears.

"Do not weep, Resi," he said. His voice was calm and gentle, but singularly grave.

She made no reply.

He came to her side and raised her head. Her sobs grew more violent.

"Do not weep," he repeated. "It was all for the best; we now know what we have to do."

She looked straight before her.

"You will come with me when I go away?"

She shook her head slowly.

"I shall try to obtain the post of crossing-keeper, which is given, I believe, to soldiers who have served during the war. You shall be my wife, and we will live in one of the little cottages beside the line. And if I fail in that," he added quickly, seeing that she made no sign of consent, and that her sobs redoubled—"if I cannot obtain this post—we will work for years with all our strength, and economize as much as possible. But, Resi, speak—tell me that you consent! Answer me!"

"Alas!" she moaned, "all that you say is Paradise, but you are not thinking of the overseer. He will never let me go."

"He cannot prevent you. You are no longer a child. He has no hold upon you, none. You are a worker like ourselves. You are free to come and go at your pleasure."

"Believe me, he will not let me go, and above all with you. I have never told you," she replied, after a pause,



whilst a crimson flush of anger dyed her face, "but he killed my mother with his cruelty. I told him at the time what I thought of him. Ever since that day he has hated me like poison, and never loses an occasion to revenge himself upon me."

George grew pale to the lips. He seemed as if he were choking.

"The scoundrel!" he cried. "At any cost you must come with me, and we shall see if he will prevent you from going."

"Be careful," she cried, in alarm. "He is quite capable of killing any being too feeble to defend itself."

"I do not fear him," said George, his small stature dilating. "He took me at a disadvantage before, but now let him come!"

"Madonna!" she moaned, wringing her hands in agony. "You must not fight! I cannot bear it."

"No, no, it will not come to that," he replied, striving to appear calm. "First of all we will tell him our decision, and you will see that he will say nothing. Coward that he is, he will be forced to acknowledge that he has no hold upon you, and that you are free. Take courage, Resi," he added, gravely. "Would you let me go away alone?"

For answer she sprang towards him, and clung tightly round his neck.

"Now we will go and find him," he said, stroking her hair gently.

They went slowly towards the cabin, Tertschka in a tumult of alarm, George dignified and perfectly calm. When they reached the cabin, they found the overseer, knife in hand, seated before the table, peeling potatoes. He started on perceiving the two young people, but his surprise soon changed into a sort of frenzy.

"What do you want here?" he cried, half rising, and gripping nervously the handle of his knife.

was passing within him. He hardly knew what to do next. As he hesitated, he threw a sidelong glance at Tertschka, who, unfortunately, could not control her agitation. As she walked towards her box he sprang upon her, and, grasping her by the shoulders, pushed her into the cellar, the door of which was half open, locked the door, and put the key in his pocket.

"That is my answer," he bellowed, with such fury that his whole body trembled. Then, gulping down his rage, he returned to his seat, and renewed his occupation.

This scene had passed so rapidly, and in a manner so unexpected, that George could do nothing to prevent it. Without any undue haste, he buckled on his knapsack, and approached the overseer slowly.

"Let Tertschka out!" he said, in a firm voice.

The overseer went on peeling his potatoes.

"Let Tertschka out!" repeated George, again.

The overseer's hands began to shake. As George repeated his demand, for the third time, in a more imperative tone, he started up with clenched fists.

"Be off," he shouted, "unless——"

"Unless what?" repeated George, calmly. "You cannot frighten me, with all your bluster. You ill-treated me when I was weak and defenceless. Now I defy you to your face!"

The overseer's countenance was terrible to look at. Hate and vengeance struggled on it with the basest cowardice. He gasped for breath, and his curved fingers seemed to clutch at something to rend to pieces.

"I advise you," said George, "to give up Tertschka, or else I shall use force."

In the midst of this scene several of the workmen had entered the cabin. Noon was approaching; perhaps they were also not unwilling to be witness of a scene which promised to be stormy. Their presence appeared

to increase the irritation of the overseer. He felt that all their eyes were upon him, and to conceal his trepidation from those scrutinizing glances he assumed an air of insolence.

"Just listen to the cur! He threatens me. Come, kick him out of the place for me."

The men looked hesitatingly at one another, but no one stirred.

"You see," George continued, "no one will touch me. I ask you for the last time to let Tertschka out, or I will use this hammer. Two blows, and the door will be smashed to atoms."

"You would break down the door, would you, you scoundrel? Be off, or I will send for the police."

"Send for them," cried George, his blood boiling

with righteous indignation. "We will soon see who is in the right. You will have to explain why you have locked Tertschka up. Everyone shall know that you have ill-treated her from childhood, that you have stolen from her the wages which she gained with so much labour. They shall also know how you oppress the feeble, and how you enrich yourself with the sweat and blood of the poor labourers confided to your charge."

George stopped. The truth of his reproaches stung his adversary into frenzy. The overseer's face turned livid. With a roar like that of a wounded bull, with foaming mouth and glaring eyes, he sprang at his opponent with his knife. George, on the other hand, scarcely knowing what he did, had gripped his hammer; it flew aloft; a dull blow resounded through the room,



"WHAT DO YOU WANT HERE?" HE CRIED.

"You have dismissed me," replied George, with a calm voice, "so I have come to get my things, and to tell you that Tertschka will go away with me."

The overseer made a movement as if about to spring upon them. Then, seeing George's determined attitude, he recoiled in alarm.

"I have nothing to reply to you," he said at last, through his clenched teeth.

"That is not necessary. Tertschka is of age, consequently she is free to do as she pleases."

The overseer burst into a hiss of fury.

"Take what belongs to you, Resi," George continued, taking down his own coat, which hung on the wall, "and let us go."

The overseer gasped painfully for breath. A struggle





"HE SPRANG AT HIS OPPONENT WITH HIS KNIFE."

and the overseer, struck full upon the chest, staggered and fell backwards on the ground.

For an instant a death-like silence reigned. George stood like David over the dead body of Goliath.

"Resi! Resi!" he cried, suddenly, as if returning to himself; and rushing to the door he broke it open with one blow. "You are free; our tyrant is no more."

"My God!" she shrieked, as she rushed out and saw the body lying stretched upon the ground. "He is dead! Oh! George! George! what have you done? You will be dragged to prison as a murderer."

"So be it! Nay, I will render myself up to justice. I will answer for my conduct to the Court. My comrades can bear witness that the overseer attacked me with a knife and that I struck in self-defence. Go," he added, turning to the men, "go to the police and tell them that George Huber, the stone-breaker, has killed your overseer."

#### V.

FOR four months George lay in the prison fortress of Wiener-Neustadt awaiting his trial. Then he and his witnesses, among whom was Tertschka, were brought before the court-martial. The following sentence was passed:—

"George Huber, formerly a soldier in the 12th Regiment, having pleaded guilty of causing, by a blow, the death of the overseer at Semmering, is sentenced to

a year's imprisonment. But taking into consideration the evidence of the witnesses, who swear that he only acted in self-defence, after the highest provocation, and his exemplary conduct whilst in the army, coupled with the personal testimony of those who know him, the Court reduces his sentence to the four months of imprisonment which he has already undergone in the fortress of Wiener-Neustadt since his arrest."

Two days after this George and Tertschka were sent for to the colonel's house. He regarded them for a moment in silence. Their sad story had touched him to the heart. Round these two poor creatures, tortured by the miseries of existence, shone the radiance of a love pure, deep, and sublime. He advised them to remain at Wiener-Neustadt, where he would procure them work, and a salary sufficient to supply their wants. He promised to do still more for them in the future; and he kept his word.

To-day, where the black rails wind beside the gleaming River Mour, in the midst of green pastures and forests of sweet-scented pine trees, where the castle of Ehrenhauser rears its lofty towers upon the hill which overlooks the village, there stands a pretty little cottage. Behind the house extends a field of vegetables and maize. Roses and great golden-petaled sunflowers bloom before the door. A hedge surrounds the whole, over which the sweet pea twines its delicate tendrils.

In this pretty cottage, whose gay exterior attracts the admiration of the passers-by, George and Tertschka dwell. Their work allows them ample leisure to cultivate their ground, to keep a goat and a brood of cackling fowls, and to bring up two chubby-cheeked, flax-haired children, who thrive amazingly behind the high hedge of sweet peas. In the evening they sit together before their cottage door, while the sunset dyes the sky with crimson flame; and their thoughts return to that well-remembered evening when first they saw each other upon the high summits of the Semmering, and to their past with all its suffering and its joys.

If these memories cast too sad a shadow on their minds they draw their laughing cherubs to their knees, and with the little, clinging arms around their necks, the silky hair against their cheeks, and the sweet innocent eyes regarding theirs, they forget, as if it were a dream, their past experience of the tears and sorrows which are the destined lot of every child of man.





# The Prisoner of Assiout.

By Grant Allen.

IT was a sultry December day at Medinet Habu. Grey haze spread dim over the rocks in the desert. The arid red mountains twinkled and winked through the heated air. I was weary with climbing the great dry ridge from the Tombs of the Kings. I sat on the broken arm of a shattered granite Rameses. My legs dangled over the side of that colossal fragment. In front of me vast colonnades stood out clear and distinct against the hot, white sky. Beyond lay bare hills; in the distance, to the left, the muddy Nile, amid green fields, gleamed like a silver thread in the sunlight.

A native, in a single dirty garment, sat sunning himself on a headless sphinx hard by. He was carving a water-melon with his knife—thick, red, ripe, juicy. I eyed it hard. With a gesture of Oriental politeness, he offered me a slice. It was too tempting to refuse, that baking hot day, in that rainless land, though I knew acceptance meant ten times its worth in the end in backsheesh.

"Arabi?" I asked, inquiringly, of my Egyptian friend, which is, being interpreted, "Are you a Mussulman?"

He shook his head firmly, and pointed with many nods to the tiny blue cross tattooed on his left wrist. "Nusráni," he answered, with a look of some pride. I smiled my acquiescence. He was a Nazarene, a Christian.

In a few minutes' time we had fallen into close talk of Egypt, past and present; the bad old days; the British occupation; the effect of strong government on the condition of the *fellaheen*. To the Christian population of the Nile Valley, of course, the

advent of the English has been a social revolution. For ages down-trodden, oppressed, despised, these Coptic schismatics at last find themselves suddenly, in the ends of the earth, co-religionists with the new ruling class in the country, and able to boast themselves in many ways over their old Moslem masters.

I speak but little colloquial Arabic myself, though I understand it with ease when it is spoken, so the conversation between us was necessarily somewhat one-sided. But my Egyptian friend soon grew voluble enough for two, and the sight of the piastres laid in his dusky palm loosed the strings of his tongue to such an alarming extent, that I began to wonder before long whether I should ever get back again to the Luxor Hotel in time for dinner.

"Ah, yes, excellency," my Copt said, slowly, when I asked him at last about the administration of justice

under Ismail's rule, "things were different then, before the English came, as Allah willed it. It was stick, stick, every month of the year. No prayers availed; we were beaten for everything. If a fellah didn't pay his taxes when crops were bad, he was lashed till he found them; if he was a Christian, and offended the least Moslem official, he was stripped to the skin, and ruthlessly bastinadoed. And then, for any insubordination, it was death outright—hanging or beheading, slash, so, with a scimitar." And my companion brought his hand round in a whirl with swishing force, as if he were decapitating some unseen criminal on the bare sand before him.

"The innocent must often have been punished with the guilty," I remarked, in my best Arabic, looking vaguely across at him.

"Ah, yes," he assented, smiling. "So Allah ordained. But sometimes, even then, the saints were kind; we got off unexpectedly. I could tell you a strange story that once happened to myself." His eyes twinkled hard. "It was a curious adventure," he went on; "the effendi might like, perhaps, to hear it. I was condemned to death, and all but executed. It shows the wonderful ways of Allah."

These Coptic Christians, indeed, speaking Arabic as they do, and living so constantly among a Mussulman population, have imbibed many Mohammedan traits of thought, besides the mere accident of language, such as speaking of the Christian God as Allah. Fatalism has taken as strong a hold of their minds as of Islam itself.

"Say on," I answered, lightly, drawing a cigarette from my case. "A story is always of interest to me, my friend. It brings grist to the mill. I am a man of the pen. I write down in books all the strange things that are told me."

My Egyptian smiled again. "Then this tale of mine," he said, showing all his white teeth, and brushing away the flies from his sore eye as he spoke, "should be worth your money, for it's as strange as any of the Thousand and One Nights men tell for hire at Cairo. It happened to me near Assiout, in Ismail's days. I was a bold young man then—too bold for Egypt. My father had a piece of ground by the river side that was afterwards taken from us by Ismail for the Daira.

"In our village lived a Sheik, a very hard man; a Mussulman, an Arab, a descendant of the Prophet. He was the greatest Sheik for miles and miles around.



"HE OFFERED ME A SLICE."





"WE SAT AND TALKED TOGETHER."

He had a large white house, with green blinds to the windows, while all the rest of us in his government lived in mud-built huts, round and low like beehives. He had date palms, very many, and dooms, and doura patches. Camels were his, and buffaloes, and asses, and cows; 'twas a very rich man; oh, so rich and powerful. When he went forth to town he rode on a great white mule. And he had a harem, too; three wives of his own, who were beautiful as the day—so girls who had seen them said, for as for us, we saw them not—plump women every one of them, as the Khedive's at Cairo, with eyes like a gazelle's, marked round with kohl, and their nails stained red every day with henna. All the world said the Sheik was a happy man, for he had the finest dates of the country to eat, and servants and camels in plenty to do his bidding.

"Now, there was a girl in our village, a Nusráni like me, a beautiful young girl: and her name was Laila. Her eyes were like those of that child there—Zanobi—who carries the effendi's water-gourd on her head; and her cheeks were round and soft as a grape after the inundation. I meant to wed her; and she liked me well. In the evening we sat and talked together under the whispering palm-trees. But when the time drew near for me to marry her, and I had arranged with her parents, there came a message from

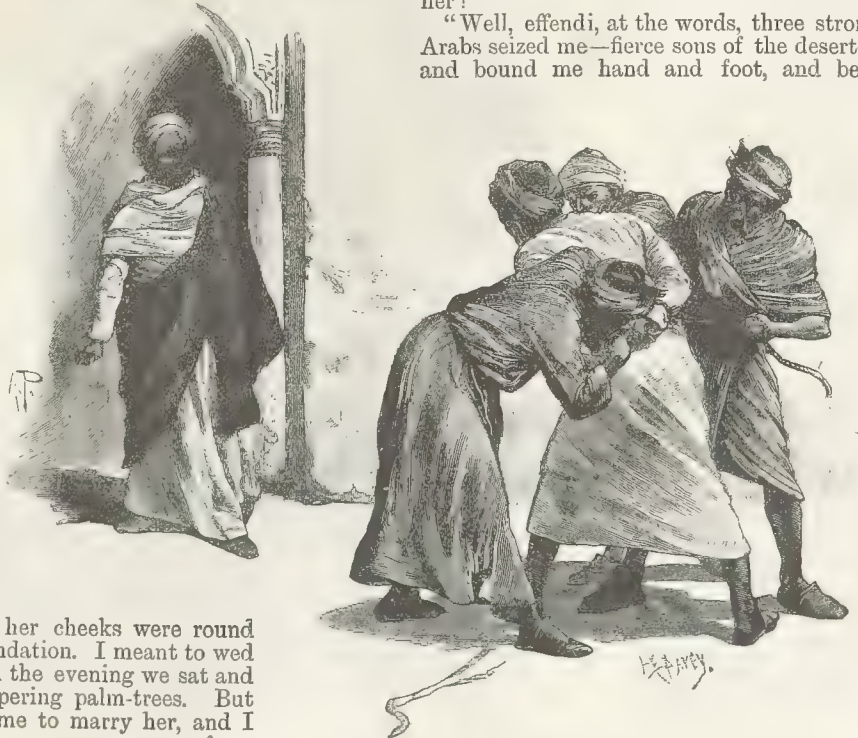
the Sheik. He had seen the girl by the river as she went down to draw water with her face unveiled, and, though she was a Nusráni, she fired his soul, and he wished to take her away from me to put her into his harem.

"When I heard that word I tore my clothes in my rage, and, all Christian that I was, and of no account with the Moslems, I went up to the Sheik's house in a very white anger, and I fell on my face and asked leave to see him.

"The Sheik sat in his courtyard, inside his house, and gave audience to all men, after the fashion of Islam. I entered, and spoke to him. 'Oh, Sheik,' I said, boldly, 'Allah and the Khedive have prospered you with exceeding great prosperity. You have oxen and asses, buffaloes and camels, men-servants and maid-servants, much millet and cotton and sugar-cane; you drink Frank wine every day of your life, and eat the fat of the land; and your harem is full of beautiful women. Now, in the village where I live is a Nusráni girl, whose name is Laila. Her eyes are bright towards mine, and I love her as the thirsty land loves water. Yet hear, O Sheik: word is brought me now that you wish to take this girl, who is mine; and I come to plead with you to-day as Nathan the Prophet pleaded with David, the King of the Beni Israel. If you take away from me my Laila, my one ewe lamb—'

"But, at the word, the Sheik rose up, and clenched his fist and was very angry. 'Who is this dog,' he asked, 'that he should dare to dictate to me?' He called to his slaves that waited on his nod. 'Take this fellow,' he cried in his anger, 'and tie him hand and foot, and flog him as I bid on his naked back, that he may know, being a Christian, an infidel dog, not to meddle with the domestic affairs of Moslems. It were well he were made acquainted with his own vileness by the instrumentality of a hundred lashes. And go to-morrow and bring Laila to me, and take care that this Copt shall never again set eyes on her!'

"Well, effendi, at the words, three strong Arabs seized me—fierce sons of the desert—and bound me hand and foot, and beat



"THREE STRONG ARABS SEIZED ME."



me with a hundred lashes of the kurbash till my soul was sick and faint within me. I swooned with the disgrace and with the severity of the blows. And I was young in those days. And I was very angry.

"That night I went home to my own mud hut, with black blood in my heart, and took counsel with my brother Sirgeh how I should avenge this insult. But first I sent word by my brother to Laila's hut that Laila's father should bring her to meet us in the dusk, in very great secrecy, by the bank of the river. In the grey twilight she came down. A dahabiah was passing, and in it was a foreigner, a very great prince, an American prince of great wealth and wisdom. I remember his name even. Perhaps the effendi knows him. He was Cyrus P. Quackenboss, and he came from Cincinnati."

"I have not the honour," I answered, smiling at this very unexpected Western intrusion.

"Well, anyhow," my Copt continued, unheeding my smile, "we hailed the dahabiah, and made the American prince understand how the matter stood. He was very kind. We were brother Christians. He took Laila on board, and promised to deliver her safe to her aunt at Karnak, so that the Sheik might not know where the girl was gone, nor send to fetch her. And the counsel I took next with my brother was this. In the dead of night I rose up from my hut and put a mask of white linen over the whole of my face, to conceal my features, and stole out alone with a thick stick in my hands, and went to the Sheik's house, down by the bank of the river. As I went, the jackals prowled around the village for food, and the owls from the tombs flitted high in the moonlight.

"I broke into the Sheik's room by the flat-roofed outhouse that led to his window, and I locked the door; and there, before the Sheik could rouse his household, I beat him, blow for blow, within an inch of his life, in revenge for my own beating, and because of his injustice in trying to take my Laila from me. The Sheik was a powerful man, with muscles like iron, and he grappled me hard, and tried to wrench the stick from me, and bruised me about the body by flinging me on the ground; and I was weak with my beating, and very sore all over. But still, being by nature a strong young man, very fierce with anger, I fought him hard, and got him under in the end, and thracked him till he was as black and blue as I myself was, one mass of bruises from head to foot with my cudgelling. Then, just as his people succeeded in forcing the door, I jumped out of the window upon the flat-roofed outhouse, and leapt lightly to the ground, and darted like a jackal across the open cotton-fields and between the plots of doura to my own little hut on the outskirts of the village. I reached there panting, and I knew the Sheik would kill me for my daring.

"Next morning, early, the Sheik sent to arrest me. He was blind with rage and with the effect of the blows: his face was livid, and his cheeks purple. 'By the beard of the Prophet, Atha-

nasio,' he said to me, hitting me hard on the cheek—my name is Athanasio, effendi, after our great patriarch—'your blood shall flow for this, you dog of a Christian. You dare to assault the wearer of a green turban, a prince in Islam, a descendant of the Prophet! You shall suffer for it, you cur! Your base blood shall flow for it!'

"I cast myself down, like a slave, on the ground before him—though I hated him like sin: for it is well to abase oneself in due time before the face of authority. Besides, by that time, Laila was safe, and that was all I cared about. 'Suffer for what, O my Sheik?' I cried, as though I knew not what he meant. 'What have I done to your Excellency? Who has told you evil words concerning your poor servant? Who has slandered me to my lord, that he is so angry against me?'

"'Take him away!' roared the Sheik to the three strong Arabs. 'Carry him off to be tried before the Cadi at Assiout.'

"For even in Ismail's days, you see, effendi, before the English came, the Sheik himself would not have dared to put me to death untried. The power of life and death lay with the Cadi at Assiout.

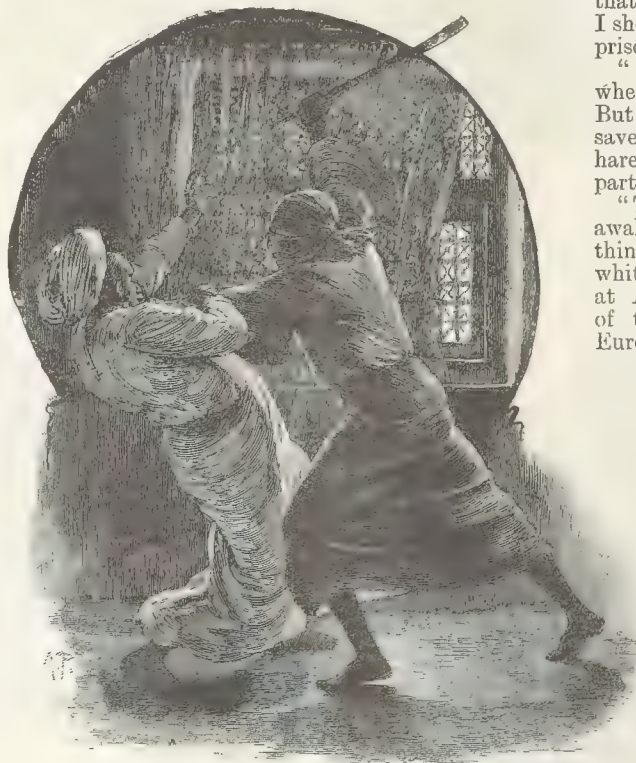
"So they took me to Assiout, into the mosque of Ali, where the Cadi sat at the seat of judgment, and arraigned me before him a week later. There the Sheik appeared, and bore witness against me. Those who spoke for me pleaded that, as the Sheik himself admitted, the man who broke into his room, and banged him so hard, had his face covered with a linen cloth: how, then, could the Sheik, in the hurry and the darkness, be sure he recognised me? Perhaps it was some other, who took this means to ruin me. But the Sheik, for his part, swore by Allah, and by the Holy Stone of the Kaaba at Mecca, that he saw me distinctly, and knew it was I. The moonlight through the window revealed my form to him. And who else in the village but me had a grudge against his justice?

"The Cadi was convinced. The Cadi gave judgment. I was guilty of rebellion against the Sheik and against ul-Islam; and, being a dog of a Christian, unworthy even to live, his judgment was that after three days' time I should be beheaded in the prison court of Assiout.

"You may guess, effendi, whether or not I was anxious. But Laila was safe; and to save my girl from that wretch's harem I was ready, for my part, to endure anything.

"Two nights long I lay awake and thought strange things by myself in the whitewashed cell of the gaol at Assiout. The governor of the prison, who was a European—an Italian, he

called himself—and a Christian of Roum, of those who obey the Pope, was very kind indeed to me. He knew me before (for I had worked in his fields), and was sorry when I told him the tale about Laila. But what would you have? Those were Ismail's days. It was the law of Islam. He could not prevent it.



"I FOUGHT HIM HARD."



"On the third evening, my brother came round to the prison to see me. He came, with many tears in his eyes, bringing evil tidings. My poor old father, he said, was dying at home with grief. They didn't expect he would live till morning. And Laila, too, had stolen back from Karnak unperceived, and was in hiding in the village. She wished to see me just once before I died. But if she came to the prison, the Sheik would find her out, and carry her off in triumph to his own harem.

"Would the governor give me leave to go home just that one night, to bid farewell to Laila and to my dying father?"

"Now, the governor, excellency, was a very humane man. And though he was a Christian of Roum, not a Copt like us, he was kind to the Copts as his brother Christians. He pondered awhile to himself, and roped his moustache thus; then he said to me:—

"Athanasio, you are an honest man; the execution is fixed for eight by the clock to-morrow morning. If I give you leave to go home to your father to-night, will you pledge me your word of honour, before St. George and the saints, to return before seven?"

"Effendi," I said, kissing his feet, 'you are indeed a

break my word of honour to the governor of the prison.'

"That isn't it," he made reply. 'I have a plan of my own which I will proceed in words to make clear before you.'

"What happened next would be long to relate, effendi." But I noticed that the fellah's eyes twinkled as he spoke, like one who passes over of set purpose an important episode. "All I need tell you now is, that the whole night through the good governor lay awake, wondering whether or not I would come home to time, and blaming himself in his heart for having given such leave to a mere condemned criminal. Still, effendi, though I am but poor, I am a man of honour. As the clock struck six in the prison court next morning, I knocked at the governor's window with the appointed signal; and the governor rose and let me into my cell, and praised me for my honour, and was well pleased to see me. 'I knew, Athanasio,' he said, roping his moustache once more, 'you were a man to be trusted.'

"At eight o'clock they took me out into the courtyard. The executioner was there already, a great black Nubian, with a very sharp scimitar. It was terrible to look



"EFFENDI!" I SAID, KISSING HIS FEET.

good man. I swear by the mother of God and all the saints that dwell in Heaven that, if you let me go, I will come back again a full hour before the time fixed for the execution.' And I meant it, too, for I only wished before I died to say good-bye once more to Laila.

"Well, the governor took me secretly into his own house, and telling me many times over that he trusted to my honour, and would lose his place if it were known he had let me go, he put me forth, with my brother, by his own private door, making me swear on no account to be late for the execution.

"As soon as I got outside, I said to my brother, 'Tell me, Sirgeh, at whose house is Laila?'

"And my brother answered and smiled, 'Laila is still at Karnak, where we sent her for safety, and our father is well. But I have a plan for your escape that I think will serve you.'

"Never!" I cried, horror-struck, 'if I am to

around; I was greatly frightened. 'Surely,' said I to myself, 'the bitterness of death is past. But Laila is saved; and I die for Laila.'

"I knelt down and bent my head. I feared, after all, no respite was coming. The executioner stood forth and raised the scimitar in his hand. I almost thought I heard it swish through the air; I saw the bright gleam of the blade as it descended. But just at that moment, as the executioner delayed, a loud commotion arose in the outer court. I raised my head and listened. We heard a voice cry, 'In Allah's name, let me in. There must be no execution!' The gates opened wide, and into the inner courtyard there rode with long strides a great white mule, and on its back, scarcely able to sit up, a sorry figure!

"He was wrapped round in bandages, and swathed from head to foot like a man sore wounded. His face was bruised, and his limbs swollen. But he upheld one



hand in solemn warning, and in a loud voice again he cried to the executioner, 'In Allah's name, Hassan, let there be no execution!'

"The lookers-on, to right and left, raised a mighty cry, and called out with one voice, 'The Sheik! The Sheik! Who can have thus disfigured him?'

"But the Sheik himself came forward in great pain, like one whose bones ache, and dismounting from the mule, spoke aloud to the governor. 'In Allah's name,' he said, trembling, 'let this man go; he is innocent. I swore to him falsely, though I believed it to be true. For see, last night, about twelve o'clock, the self-same dog who broke into my house before entered my room, with violence, through the open window. He carried in his hands the self-same stick as last time, and had his face covered, as ever, with a linen cloth. And I knew by his figure and his voice he was the very same dog that had previously beaten me. But before I could cry aloud to rouse the house, the infidel had fallen upon me once more, and thwacked me, as you see, within an inch of my life, and covered me with bruises, and then bid me take care how I accused innocent people like Athanasio of hurting me. And after that he jumped through the open window and went away once more. And I was greatly afraid, fearing the wrath of Allah, if I let this man Athanasio be killed in his stead, though he is but an infidel. And I rose and

saddled my mule very early, and rode straight into Assiout, to tell you and the Cadi I had borne false witness, and to save myself from the guilt of an innocent soul on my shoulders.'

"Then all the people around cried out with one voice, 'A miracle! a miracle!' And the Sheik stood trembling beside, with faintness and with terror.

"But the governor drew me a few paces apart.

"'Athanasio, you rascal,' he said, half laughing, 'it is you that have done this thing! It is you that have assaulted him. You got out last night on your word of honour on purpose to play this scurvy trick upon us!'

"'Effendi,' I made answer, bowing low, 'life is sweet; he beat me, unjustly, first, and he would have taken my Laila from me. Moreover, I swear to you, by St. George and the mother of God, when I left the prison last night I really believed my father was dying.'

"The governor laughed again. 'Well, you can go, you rogue,' he said. 'The Cadi will soon come round to deliver you. But I advise you to make yourself scarce as fast as you can, for sooner or later this trick of yours may be discovered. I can't tell upon you, or I would lose my place. But you may be found out for all that. Go, at once, up the river.'

"That is my hut that you see over yonder, effendi, where Laila and I live. The Sheik is dead. And the English are now our real lords in Egypt."



THE EXECUTIONER RAISED HIS SCIMITAR





# No. 1 Ready Thursday, October 18th.

PUBLISHED WEEKLY, PRICE ONE PENNY, COMMENCING OCTOBER 18, 1894.

EACH  
NUMBER  
A COMPLETE  
ORIGINAL  
NOVELETTE.



EACH  
NUMBER  
A COMPLETE  
ORIGINAL  
NOVELETTE.

## ❖❖ Announcement. ❖❖

For many years past a taste has been growing, and, at the present time, has become almost universal, in favour of Stories which may be read within a brief period of leisure. Under this new regime, the supremacy once held by the Novel in three volumes has been overthrown, and writers of world-wide celebrity are giving to their works of fiction a concentration of treatment which has brought some of their most remarkable and successful productions within the average bulk of one-volume books, in this way placed within the reach of countless readers to whom, otherwise, they would, in all probability, have remained unknown.

A further development of this preference for novels of limited length is evidenced by the avidity with which vast numbers of readers turn to works of fiction executed in the still more compressed form of "Novelettes," supplying reading enough for one sitting by the fireside, or for use at any moment of leisure which it is desired to employ in entertaining reading.

These considerations have led us to project a new weekly series of short novels by writers of approved talent and experience, who have achieved the art of telling stories of absorbing interest in the most enthralling and delightful manner.

The range of THE STRAND NOVELETES, in regard to subject, will be almost unbounded, variety holding a foremost place in the Editor's scheme of selection. The love story, the story of surprising adventure, the detective story, the romance of every-day life, will, in turn, be offered to the reader in the most attractive and picturesque dress that can be given to it, the tone of all being such as to satisfy the purest taste.

Each number of THE STRAND NOVELETES will consist of Thirty-two pages, and will contain a complete original story, embellished by three Engravings from designs by the most effective story-illustrators of the day.

**GEORGE NEWNES, Limited.**

## Novelettes in Immediate Preparation.

- No. 1.—**"AN UNSEEN HAND."** By ISABEL BELLERBY. Illustrated by PAUL HARDY.  
No. 2.—**"THE MADNESS OF JULIAN ANSTEY."** By PLEYDELL NORTH. Illustrated by A. H. JOHNSON.  
No. 3.—**"THE CASTING OF THE DIE."** By ADA M. BELLERBY. Illustrated by ARTHUR TWIDLE.  
No. 4.—**"A DEADLY ENMITY."** By CARLTON STRANGE. Illustrated by PAUL HARDY.



For **ALL-I-KES**

**THE CASTLE**

**OR**

**THE COTTAGE.**

**BECHAM'S PILLS**

**FOR ALL-I-KES**

